

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD DANIEL GLADDING:

A CONTRIBUTION TO A SURVEY OF LIFE AND STRUCTURES ON THE COMSTOCK

Interviewee: Edward Daniel Gladding

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Description

Edward Daniel Gladding, a third generation Nevadan, was born in Virginia City, Nevada, in 1910. He attended the Fourth Ward School and graduated from there in 1930. In 1933 he became the postmaster of Virginia City, a position he held until he retired in 1969. Mr. Gladding married Marion Andreasen, also a native Nevadan, in 1943.

In this oral history, Mr. Gladding discusses his memories of his father, Edward Seth Gladding, a man who worked on the Comstock as a miner most of his life, and provides the reader with much useful information on the daily life of a hard rock miner during the opening decades of the twentieth century. Mr. Gladding also reminisces about some of his own experiences as postmaster in Virginia City, a position he held for over thirty-five years, and which provided him with a unique vantage point from which to observe the changes that occurred in the life of the Comstock during the middle decades of this century. Finally, Mr. Gladding reminisces about the campaign to save the wild horses, a movement that began in Storey County, and with which he was intimately involved.

Throughout his oral history, Mr. Gladding displays a warmth and a strength of character typical of the men and women who grew up on the Comstock. They survived the difficult period of transition from an economy grounded in mining to one grounded in tourism.

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD DANIEL GLADDING

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A CONTRIBUTION TO A SURVEY OF
LIFE AND STRUCTURES ON THE COMSTOCK**

PREPARED FOR THE STOREY COUNTY, NEVADA
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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An Oral History Conducted by Ann Harvey
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University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

ORIGINAL PREFACE

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (OHP) engages in systematic interviewing of persons who can provide firsthand descriptions of events, people and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiographical synthesization as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned. Verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the OHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the OHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim

as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often totally unreadable and therefore a total waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the OHP will, in preparing a text;

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled;

- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;

- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context; and

- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered

but have been added to render the text intelligible.

There will be readers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without even the minimal editing that occurred in the production of this text; they are directed to the tape recording.

Copies of all or part of this work and the tape recording from which it is derived are available from:

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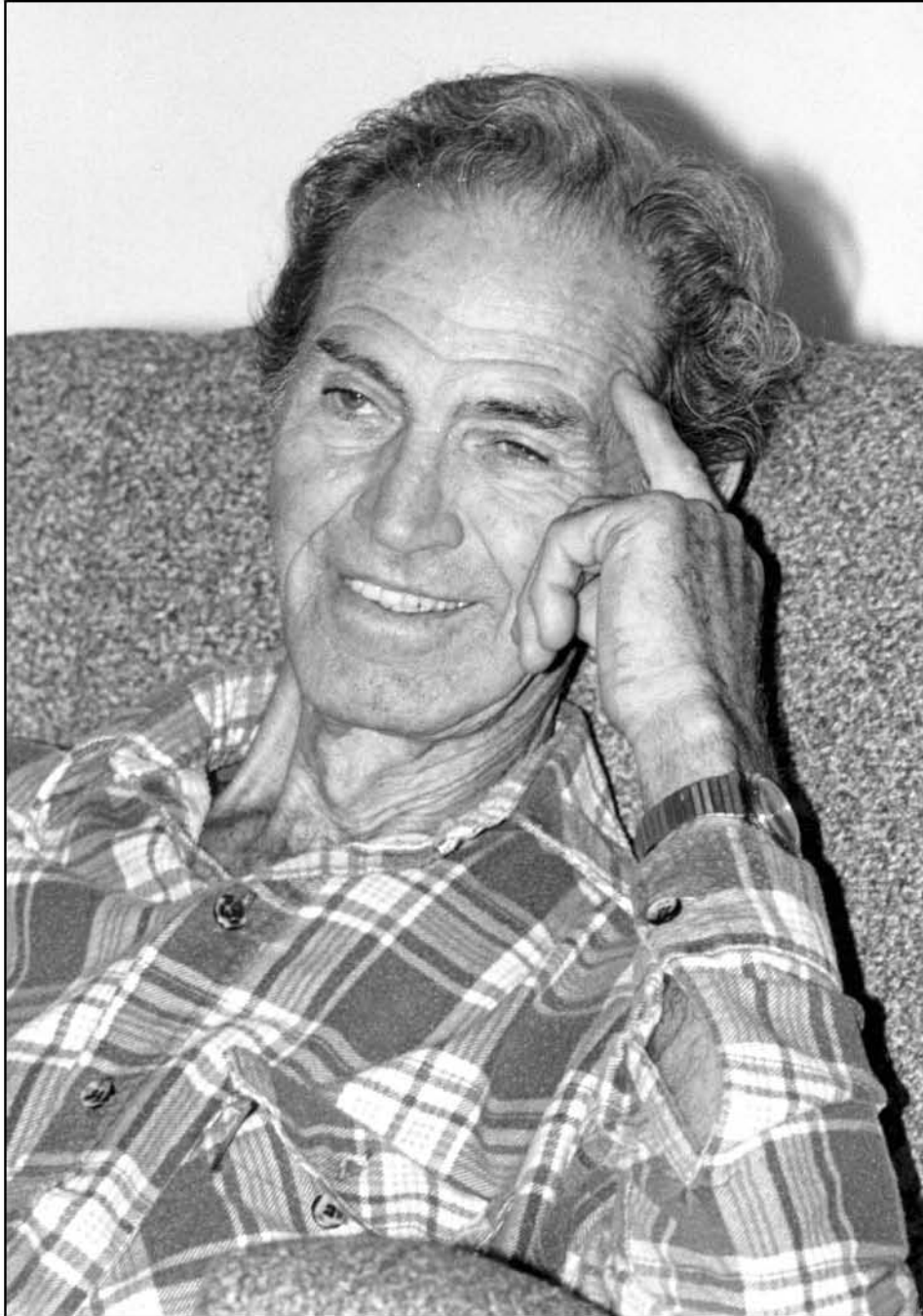
INTRODUCTION

Edward Daniel Gladding, a third generation Nevadan, was born in Virginia City, Nevada, in 1910. He attended the Fourth Ward School and graduated from there in 1930. In 1933 he became the postmaster of Virginia City, a position that he held until he retired in 1969. Mr. Gladding married Marion Andreasen, also a native Nevadan, in 1943.

In this oral history interview Edward Gladding discusses his memories of his father, Edward Seth Gladding, a man who worked on the Comstock as a miner most of his life, and provides the reader with much useful information on the daily life of a hard rock miner during the opening decades of the twentieth century. Mr. Gladding also reminisces about some of his own experiences as postmaster in Virginia City, a position which he held for over 35 years, and which provided him with a unique vantage point from which to observe the changes that occurred in the life of the Comstock during the middle decades of this century. Finally, Mr. Gladding reminisces about the campaign to save the wild horses, a movement which began in Storey County,

and with which he was intimately involved.

Throughout his oral history Mr. Gladding displays a warmth and a strength of character that is typical of the men and women who grew up on the Comstock. Nurtured in the close-knit mining community of the early Comstock, these men and women acquired the strength and the resolve to survive the difficult period of transition from an economy grounded in mining to one that was grounded in tourism. The grace with which they adapted to this transformation is a tribute to the spirit of the Comstock.



EDWARD DANIEL GLADDING

1984

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD DANIEL GLADDING

Edward Gladding: I was born in Virginia City, Storey County, on 24 March 1910.

Ann Harvey: Were you born in the hospital or at home?

I was born at home. At such time as 1910, I don't recall we even had a hospital here.

Where was your home located?

Well, I was born on Ridge Street. That's more or less in the south end of Virginia City. I imagine they called it Ridge Street because it sort of separated Virginia City from what they called the Divide area, where you go over the hill and drop down into Gold Hill and on into Silver City.

Tell me the names of your brothers and sisters.

I had no brothers. I had 2 sisters. My oldest was Harriet, and my younger sister's name was Carroll, the original family name on my mothers's side.

What were your mother and your father's full names?

My mother was Elizabeth Alice Carroll. That was her maiden name. My father's name was Edward Seth Gladding.

When and where was your father born?

My dad was born in Wadsworth, Nevada, around 1875.

Where did your father go to school?

He attended Virginia City schools. Now, I don't know exactly which year the Fourth Ward School came into being, but certainly he did attend the Fourth Ward School. I would assume that he spent his earlier years in grammar school and on through school in Virginia City at the Fourth Ward School. I don't really know if my dad ever graduated from school or not.

What were your father's occupations? I know he was a butcher. Was that his first job?

Yes. As I mentioned, of course, this was prior to my arrival in 1910. It was perhaps in the late 1800s and into the early 1900s. But at that time he was a butcher. He started out working in what they call a slaughterhouse; we had one as you approached Virginia City on the north end of town. We had another one out on what we refer to as Jumbo Grade—that's going toward the old Five Mile reservoir. He worked at both of those slaughterhouses for several years, and, in turn, he also worked in a couple of the local butcher shops of that day.

Did the slaughterhouses have specific names?

They may have had. I have never heard them referred to as anything other than just the slaughterhouse.

Do you know where the cattle came from that they killed in the slaughterhouses?

Yes. At that time our source of meat supply—all the cattle—were pretty much raised in or about Reno in the early days, and through [Washoe] Valley. They would herd these cattle up over the old Geiger Grade coming into Virginia City and on into the slaughterhouses. I guess, depending on the supply or demand at that particular time, if it was necessary that they might go from one slaughterhouse to the other; they kept them pretty well supplied.

Do you remember the names of any of the butcher shops that your dad worked at?

Yes. He worked for a man by the name of Hancock one time, who in those years had a well-established butcher shop in Virginia City. I know that he worked in 2 or 3 different butcher shops, but he worked for the longest

period of time in what they call the Hancock butcher shop. It was right on main street in Virginia City approximately 3 or 4 doors north of where the Crystal Bar is at the present time.

Did it become a barber shop later on?

Not to my knowledge. There was a barber shop close by in location to that market but not exactly in that building. It was a door or 2 or 3 away from where the meat market was—the butcher shop.

Did your father ever tell you about any of his experiences as a butcher?

Yes, thinking back, he's probably told me all kinds of happenings during such time as when he was a butcher. I can remember his telling me about the kids in Virginia City. In that day and age [they] would go to a butcher shop for their mother to buy a perhaps 25¢ or 35¢ round steak, and they always were treated to a wienie or something like that just thrown in for good will. He told me stories about that sort of thing. We didn't have too big a population in Virginia City, and, of course, everyone knew everyone else; it was sort of a big family deal.

I remember when my mother used to make pasties. I don't suppose you would have any idea of what a pasty is, but whenever anyone might be making pasties and would buy round steak or something that they usually used in making the pasties, they would make the crusts out of suet. Well, suet, of course, for anyone who doesn't know exactly, [is the] fat off the cattle; [the butcher] would throw in a big piece of suet. If you were making a pot of soup, and they had any knowledge of what you were doing, perhaps while you were buying something completely

different, they would throw in a big soup bone, just free gratis. Now you go out to the market and you buy a soup bone if they still have such a thing, and I imagine you pay a couple of dollars for that.

Right. It sounds like there was a wonderful community feeling here in the early 1900s.

Yes. There was, and through the many years after that. In fact, I guess it's always been a pretty nice town to live in. People are always friendly and... just everyone knew everyone else, and it was like one great big family.

I know your father was also a miner. Which mines did he work in?

He spent most of his time at the Con-Virginia mine in Virginia City, what they call the C & C shaft [shaft sunk jointly by Con-Virginia and California mines]. In fact, he worked 23 years in the C & C shaft. I remember, in that day and age, I think they were paying like \$3 a shift. Things bettered in later years. They probably got \$4 a shift. But they were working in the lower levels, the 3,000-and-below-foot levels in the C & C shaft at that time, as well as [that level in] some other mines here. It was so hot in those deep mines; they would work in what they call headings, drifts or in these heavy headings that a lot of people refer to as a tunnel nowadays. They used to refer to them as drifts, and the face of the drift was what they referred to as the heading. They would work in there under these conditions. The temperatures were so terrific, they were working 15-minute passes. Two men would go in—2 or 3. They'd put in 15 minutes. They would retire back to the station, and they had huge tubs filled with ice water where they would douse themselves with the ice water to

cool off. Then once again, the others would in turn come out, after they'd completed their short stint of 15 minutes, and once again, the others would go back in. Those days they were working 9 hours. That was even before they finally got around to 8-hour shifts on the Comstock.

Now this is about what, 1900 to 1910?

Yes, I would say perhaps around 1905, 1904.

You used the term "station." Could you tell us what a station is?

It was like a room cut out underground where they would load the cars, for instance, to hoist to the surface this, that and the other. The best I could compare it to is just an opening here and there where, I imagine in this case, they would come back out of the heading and cool themselves off and go back in once again and put in another 15-minute stint. The water was so hot in those lower levels in the Virginia City mines in that day, particularly this particular Con-Virginia mine, you could boil eggs in that water, it was so hot.

That's incredible!

Of course, something had to create the hot water, and there was smoldering fires throughout the depths—the deep mines on the Comstock—where actually they would run into smoldering fires and at times would have to put up what they call a fire wall and block it off. They could no longer work in that particular section of the mine, it was so hot. And that is what actually created all the heat, and that, in turn, created the hot water problem.

How did they get the water out of the mines?

They were working the lower levels, of course, at such time as when Adolph Sutro came into Nevada, and finally after years and years [he] was successful in coming through with the Sutro Tunnel. The object was, of course at that time, to drain the Comstock mines at a certain level. Below that level, it was necessary to have pumping stations once again to pump it up to the Sutro Tunnel level so it would flow through Sutro Tunnel and out into the flats below. And that water...naturally it cooled so much through this procedure, but it was still quite warm when it exited the Sutro Tunnel down on the other side, heading down toward Dayton, Nevada, in the valley there. I remember they used to have a sort of pond there where they corralled a lot of this water. Then, little by little, they had a few ranches there at that time, and they would use it for irrigation purposes. But it was actually real warm when it came out [of] the Sutro Tunnel after it had traveled that distance.

I didn't realize it was still warm.

Oh, yes, it was.

Well, as I mentioned, my dad worked 23 years. I recall that in all those years he never had one day off. Sunday made no difference, and I recall that on such time as Christmas my mother would have to arrange our Christmas dinners according to what shift he happened to be on. We had 3 shifts: what they called the day shift, afternoon shift and graveyard shift. The graveyard shift was the late shift from 11:00 at night until the following morning.

I recall at one time—it was 1915, I believe—when they had the fair in San Francisco; San Francisco Exhibition they referred to it. My mom and my dad went to San Francisco. They spent one week overall,

and that was the only vacation I can ever remember him [taking], or the only day off. In fact, I [never] remember him being off work for even a day, and that included, as I say, 7 days a week. Sunday made no difference. It didn't matter what day it was; they worked every day of their lives.

What exactly did the miners do in the mines? Did your dad ever tell you about what they did down there?

Well, there's different things naturally you do as a miner. You have miners, [and] you have what they refer to as muckers. The miners would go into the headings and to the stopes, drifts, what have you, and drill the holes and load them and blast. The muckers would come in behind them the next shift, and they'd muck that out into the cars, [which went] out to the station where they [were] loaded on the cages and hoisted to the surface. Then, of course, you had timber men. They were responsible to timber the drifts and the stopes.

What kind of timbering did they have here?

Well, in the early days, it was just, as I recall, a very simple method of timbering. In later years, however, they invented what they called the square-set process. They would set in the uprights, and they were notched. Then they capped—what they referred to as a cap that went over the uprights. The uprights were set in a sort of an angle like. But everything was notched on the top where the cross members ran across and fit together solidly, and those were spread depending on the weight of the ground above. They were ordinarily separated about 8 to 10 feet apart. As they worked into the drifts, they would timber behind; after so many feet they would

set up the timber. Incidentally, in later years—about 1928, 1929—mining was at a standstill. There was nothing much doing, and [my dad] ended up in Plumas County, [California], at the old Walker mine. He worked up there for several years; he was the first one to put in a square-set in the Walker mine.

Oh, really?

Yes. That was only because of the fact that he understood this and [had] worked so many years on the Comstock.

It's interesting how the miners carried their knowledge of mining techniques with them to new places like your father did with the square-set timbering.

I can't remember the man's name who actually [devel oped the process].

It was Philip Deidesheimer.

But prior to that [timbering] was just pretty much on the same principle; however, there was no notching or the fitting into place [of] the cross members up on top. That was just setting up the posts, whether they were square or round or what have you, caps certainly, and they'd drive wedges in and try to hold them. So the square-set process at that particular time was really a great invention. [laughter] Nowadays what seems so simple, well, at that particular time, was really something. It really was.

Did your father ever tell you any stories about his experiences while working down in the mines?

Ah, yes, many, many. I guess almost every day or 2 he would come home with some

kind of a story; I can't remember but funny little things. In those days the miners chewed tobacco—chewing tobacco—and the reason for that was they weren't allowed to smoke on the job. They couldn't smoke cigarettes or a pipe or anything like that. So those who were, I guess you might say addicted to tobacco, chewed chewing tobacco to satisfy their desires. But I remember my dad used to call it the plugs of chewing tobacco. Nowadays a plug is, say, 2 inches by 4 inches. Those days, they called it a plug, but there were 6 like that in this one [package] of tobacco. It was Star tobacco, I guess at that time the strongest chewing tobacco anybody could...but my dad chewed an awful lot of tobacco, believe me.

The miners enjoyed their chewing tobacco then?

Oh, that wasn't the reason. They wouldn't allow them to smoke underground.

With the dynamite and whatnot it could have been dangerous, I guess.

Oh, no. Not necessarily that you'd have to ignite dynamite, I mean with a fuse in the cap. But no, it was just for some reason or other they didn't approve of smoking underground. Now I can't think of any particular reason. I don't think there were any of these people around in that day and age that were out condemning people for this, that or the other. so I can't think of any particular reason.

Maybe they wanted them to keep working when they were down in the mines. [laughter]

Yes. That could possibly have been part of the reason.

Well, there were gases down there from time to time, that might be part of the reason, too.

Oh, yes. It was quite gassy after they set off the powder when they were drilling and blasting in the stopes and raises and drifts. I can't really think of any reason, but I do recall that miners, to my knowledge, never smoked underground. The majority of them, I imagine, chewed tobacco.

Did your father ever tell you about any accidents that took place in the mines?

Well, he's told about—not to me directly, but through the family—and I remember times when someone would get killed, caved on or crushed between the cars and underground wires. He would refer to these things. [There] was such a tight-knitted society in Virginia City at that time, everyone was aware of the least little thing that happened. It wasn't always pleasant; I have no pleasant thoughts about things like that.

Was there ever a fire in the C & C shaft when your dad was working there?

Not, to my knowledge, a fire underground. As I mentioned earlier fire did exist in the lower levels of these mines, and I presume that was long before even my dad's time when that sort of a thing was taking place. But as far as just an open fire or something destroying part of the underground workings or the shaft or whatever, no, I would never know. In later years, all the surface workings at the C & C mine—sometime in the 1930s—were destroyed by fire, everything on the surface.

Do you remember what the buildings were on the surface?

Well, yes. Everything that went along with any mining operation. They always had their blacksmith shop, where they worked on

the cars and that sort of thing; the carpentry shop, where they made up the square-sets for timbering; the assay office; and naturally the most prominent thing was the hoist room, where the hoisting engineers were on duty to raise and lower the cages, lift the ore out of the deep levels and bring the miners to the surface. They had a bell system—[so] many bells for this; [so] many bells for that.

The bell system was so the hoist engineer would know when to raise and lower the cages?

That's right. It was like an elevator in this day and age. Let's say you got on the cage perhaps at the 2,500-foot level, and you wanted to get off at the 2,300-foot level. You'd signal, and [the hoist engineer] would know where to stop the cage.

I remember those cages so well. At one time they had flat cables; they were like about 5 inches across and maybe an inch, three-quarters of an inch thick. That was what they used on all the cages. In the C & C shaft, they were double-decker. They had so many on the top and so many on the underside when they were going on shift [and] when they were coming off shift. They also hoisted the ore. In later-day mining they got around to where they used the round cables. But some of that old cable, now and then you see a piece of it here and there in or around the dumps.

Do you remember the names of any of the people whom your father worked with in the C & C shaft?

Oh, gosh. I can remember some of the superintendents, the mine owner and man by the name of [Whitman] Sims. He was a superintendent at the Con-Virginia at that time. A man by the name of [Zeb] Kendall for a while had interest in the C & C; he was

quite a prominent figure in Virginia City and around the Tonopah area in the early 1900s.

Could you tell us something about him? I don't know that name.

Well, he started out in Tonopah at the time of the mining boom in Tonopah; that was in the early 1900s. It was always said, and I don't doubt it, that millionaires in those days were something special. Nowadays, anybody can be a millionaire if they're half smart. [laughter] There was something rare, something special...and they used to say that he had been a millionaire 4 or 5 times.

Why did he keep losing his bundle?

Well, for one thing, he loved to gamble. He used to go to San Francisco and spend days and days playing poker in the hotels and this sort of thing.

His wife [was] Belle. We knew them both; they raised their family here. They had 3 boys. One of them was killed in World War II. Zeb, Bob and Abe were the 3 boys. Incidentally, her maiden names was Pepper.

It was Pepper?

Pepper. She originated in Florida. Have you ever heard of Claude Pepper? The old guy that's always rooting and tooting for us old senile citizens. She was of that Pepper family in Florida.

We tell the story about one time when he and she were in San Francisco; he once again was gambling, and he beforehand had given her a certain amount of money and instructed her to just set it aside for a rainy day. Well, he was gone 2 or 3 days and nights playing poker, and this particular morning, he walked into the hotel and said to Belle, "Belle," he says,

"I'm sorry, but it's raining like hell out there." And she gave him the rest of the money, the money that she was supposed to put aside for a rainy day. [laughter] I believe these stories to be true; I have no reason to doubt them, because that's the way he lived his life, and do you know that that man died without a crying dime? Not one dime.

Now he owned mining interest in the Goldfield and Tonopah area?

He was around Tonopah during the boom years. And, of course, he was dealing in stocks and that sort of thing, too.

Oh, he was a speculator to a certain extent?

Yes. He had connections with the mining interests also, but I think that he held a superintendent's position in Tonopah for some time. Then after he came to Virginia City, he had different mining interests; the Con-Virginia was one of them. Mining, as I mentioned before, wasn't so successful in those later years. But he was an unbelievable little man who they accused of being a millionaire 4 or 5 different times in those years, but [who] died penniless here in Virginia City in the 1940s or 1950s. It would have to be in the early fifties, because we recall he worked in there at the post office one time, and that was in the 1950s.

Miners have the reputation of being good drinkers. Do you know if there was any place where your father and his friends used to spend their leisure time?

If you're suggesting that he'd hang around saloons like I have quite a bit of my lifetime, no.

I didn't know that. [laughter]

In fact, I can only remember one time in my dad's life, when World War I came to an end, they were celebrating the end of the war, and they were hanging the Kaiser in effigy on a rope stretched across the main street. Oh, yes. That's the only time that.... Well, like at Christmastime, he perhaps had 1 or 2 drinks of whiskey, but that was all. He never really did drink.

And it just so happens that in the early days people in Virginia City used to get most of their produce from down in the valley around Dayton, and I recall that at that very time, before winter, we would put in four or five 100-pound sacks of potatoes. And I recall that particular day that I mentioned was the only time I've ever seen him when he had too much to drink in all my life. He was supposed to take those potatoes off the porch and put them in the cellar, and he never got around to it that day. We had to wait a day or 2.

The Armistice Day is interesting. In fact, I've been told that everybody in Virginia City knew when the final agreement—the final settlement—of the war had been made. Do you know how they could have known?

You mean in regard to World War I?

Yes.

Oh, gosh. We had newspapers in those days. and telephone and telegraph. That wasn't in the days of the Pony Express, you know. That was in...why, let's see, 1918.

I've been told they rang bells and shot off the steam whistle.

Oh, yes. Of course, we were just one little drop in the bucket in the way of celebrating,

like after any war, like World War II. But yes, they done their fair share. I was only 8 years old, I guess, but I remember very vividly.

Something else happened about the time you were 8, and I wonder if you remember anything about it. Actually, it was about the time you were 9. The women got the right to vote. Was it ever talked about in Virginia City?

Women's suffrage?

Yes.

Oh, I suppose it was. We never paid any attention, I guess; there was nothing unusual that I recall about that situation. I remember when the country first adopted Prohibition.

That was about 1919.

I remember that well, because I remember everybody including your next door neighbor, practically, in Virginia City had a still running making whiskey.

Oh, really? [laughter]

Oh, sure. [But] no, not everyone.

Where did your father get his hair cut during about 1910-1919?

Oh gosh, there were several barber shops. One thing we had an overabundance of, I would say, is barber shops.

Could you remember some of their names and tell us their locations and describe them?

Oh, yes, a few of them, I guess. There was a man by the name of Fred Strauss. He cut my hair in later years. A man by the name

of Huddy, Thomas Huddy, had a barber shop. There was a man by the name of Louis Avansino, who was in the barbering business here for years, but, however, he did come in later years. And there were others I can't recall.

Do you remember where Mr. Strauss's barber shop was located?

It was in what they called the Frederick building that no longer exists. If you're familiar with Virginia City, you perhaps know where the building is they refer to as the Skydeck now on the corner of Main Street and what they called Union. But anyway, there was a huge brick building—5 or 6-story brick building—behind, and the wooden part on the street below. The wooden part of the building extended from the rear of that large brick building right out to the main street, or C Street now. And that is where Strauss, at that particular time, had his barber shop.

It was a brick building, and it had wood, too?

Behind, as I say, about half of the footage that was running east and west was the brick building. Then [it] extended with the wooden addition right out to the main street—our main street now; that's where the barber shop was at that time. There was a China store [Chinese owned] down underneath on the street below—D Street. The main street is C, and the street below they call D; they run alphabetically.

The China store there I remember well. We used to go there, and if we needed a pair of shoes our mom would take us down and buy us a pair of shoes or something. Of course, they had to be pretty worn out before we got a pair, but nevertheless, this old Chinaman, Chung Kee was his name, was there for years;

gosh, I don't know how many, many, many years.

So, Chung Kee had a store on D Street?

A Chinese store. They sold about everything—clothing. At one time they even sold canned goods in the back end. The most important thing at that time—particularly to the miners coming off shift at the mines below the C & C [who] would go in for what they called a "Chung Kee liner." That was what they call now, or have called, an after-shifter. They would go in and get a shot of whiskey and a beer, and that's what they called a "Chung Kee liner."

Getting the dirt out of their lungs.

Right. At that time, I think it was 10¢ or 15¢

That's not bad!

Not *bad*? [laughter] Well, for those that wanted their so-called little after-shifter. All the miners—not all, but quite a majority of them—would stop when they got off shift and go in and have their favorite little cocktail, you might say.

That's interesting.

He was there for years and years, this Chung Kee. He finally decided to retire and go back to China. This was in much later years, but his son-in-law took over the store at that time. You see, he wasn't back there but a few years, and he died. He was a real old, old man.

What was his son-in-law's name?

I believe it was Wong. That would be the last name, yes. I can't think of his first name.

Do you know what ever became of Mr. Wong?

No, I don't. I would assume he wasn't too much younger actually, but I imagine he wouldn't still be alive either.

Did your father ever tell you about the Chinese that lived in Virginia City in those days?

No, not too much. That was a way back before my time. Oh, I can remember several Chinese in Virginia City in the later years. I remember a laundry that was run by Chinese and 3 or 4 different restaurants that the Chinese had. In my days I remember that there weren't too many, but there were still a number of Chinese. We had the largest Chinese population in Virginia City at one time than in any other city in the whole western part of the country.

Do you have any idea when that was? That's fascinating.

Well, that would be going a way back to the late 1800s, perhaps even before that.

When Mr. Wong had his store here, that was probably 1920?

It was before 1920, probably around 1900, and from there on for many years, I would think, up until the early 1920s or thereabouts.

We know that there were 2 Indian camps in Virginia City. Did your father ever tell you anything about the Indians in Virginia City at his time which was, say, prior to 1920?

No, I don't believe he would have to. We did have 2 Indian camps, as you mentioned, one in the north end of town. Incidentally, where we lived on Ridge Street, there was an

Indian camp not over perhaps a couple of thousand feet beyond where we lived. And there was quite a few Indians that congregated over there and lived there during my time.

Do you remember what the camp looked like?

There were mostly tents—tent-type things—and there were a few little, small wooden buildings. There still remains a settlement here on this end of town down off the Six Mile Canyon road there, yes.

There was an Indian camp off of Ridge Street, and then one off Six Mile Canyon?

Yes. But, of course, they were there prior to my time. But I remember all the Indians so well, the ones that were left; there was quite a few of them. There was also quite a few in this end of town.

Could you reminisce about some of the Indians that you knew?

All I can remember is when we were kids we used to give them a bad time. They referred to the men of the household as the buck, and the squaw—that was the Indian lady. Of course, they done work. I remember they used to pick up any kind of wood they could, and she would load it on her back, and as she turned to be on her way, we used to get so much enjoyment by sneaking up behind her and twisting her around with that lumber. I'll never forget that.

Children can be little devils.

Of course, Indians those days never bothered anyone. They would go out now and then and take some kind of a little job for anything they could pick up. We used to have

an Indian squaw who came to our house once a week on Monday and did the washing. If I recall correctly, I think it was 50¢. She would work for hours for 50¢.

Oh, wow!

So many of them done that. They would do anything, you know, just to make a dollar to get something to eat.

Is there anything else you want to tell us about your father?

No. He probably told me hundreds of things, but right offhand, I can't think of them now. You know, all I can say is, remembering my father—he worked practically every day of his life. We weren't exactly what you call poor people, but we were like most other people. Things were never too great, but we managed to have food on our table and halfway decent clothes....

What political party did your father belong to?

Well, my dad was always not only a Republican, I would say a *staunch* Republican.

Did he belong to any social clubs or any other kind of organization here in Virginia City?

Nothing in the way of a civic organization. He belonged to the Miners' Union, I guess, from the time when he first was working in the mines. Civic-wise I can't particularly recall anything that he became too much interested in.

Did he ever hold an office in the Miners' Union that you know of?

No, not to my knowledge. He spent many years as shift boss at one time, and it seems

as though he held that job most of his later years. Then in later years he went to northern California in Plumas County, and also was a shift boss there for years.

Did your father ever tell you anything about the Miners' Union?

No. All I can remember is—and I think perhaps some of them might still be around—the little books that they used to get from the union. They had stamps they would paste in the books for their paid dues for certain months and for a certain party. I've seen those; at the time I never thought too much about them.

No, there was nothing he ever told me about the union personally, but it was a strong organization particularly in Virginia City during the mining days. In fact, in the real early days of the Comstock, I wouldn't doubt but what it might have originated right here in the Comstock. I'm not positive of that; that would be going way, way back in the early days during the bonanza period.

Did they ever go on strike in your father's times, say, between 1900-1920?

Yes. I believe that there were times—you might refer to it as being in a strike situation. But if and when that did happen, it seemed as though it was only a matter of a few days or a few weeks, and they would be back to work again.

So it didn't take them very long to settle?

No. Nothing like in this day and age where you can hang up everything for over a period of months and months.

Why do you think they settled the strikes so quickly in those days?

Well, I mentioned that in the earlier days the miners were working for \$3 a day. When they advanced them finally in later years to the \$4 a day wage, I think they gained that through suggesting or trying to manipulate a strike situation. But I don't think that it involved any situation where they were off the job for any period of time; at that time it got around to where the mining companies—the superintendents of the mining companies and the mining companies themselves—realized that [the time] had come when [the miners] were entitled to a little more money.

So we're talking now of the raise to \$4 a day. That was probably the 1860s or 1870s?

No, that was much later years than that, because my dad worked, as I mentioned before, many years for \$3 a day. incidentally, they were receiving \$3 a day and working 10 hours a shift. It could be that about the time when they paid them \$1 more a day, they also cut the hours from 10 to 8.

This probably happened somewhere between 1905 to 1915?

Yes, thereabouts.

Now I would like to talk to you about your mother. What was her full name, and where was she born?

Well, her name was Alice Carroll. She was born in Gold Hill, attended the Gold Hill schools; in fact, she never did attend Virginia City schools. My mother graduated from the eighth grade. Those days, people didn't go to school like they have in later years where they demand at least a high school education, and in some cases further than that. She was

a member of a family of Irish—2 boys and 4 girls, I believe.

And did they settle in Gold Hill?

Yes. They lived in Gold Hill down in what they refer to as Slippery Gulch, an area between lower Gold Hill and Silver City.

Why did they call it slippery Gulch?

Well, now, that I couldn't answer. That just originated, I guess, so many, many years back. My mother's father was killed in the mines up in Como, Nevada—a blast and explosion in the mine—in 1906.

Well, they lived in Gold Hill for most of their lifetime, and then when my mom married my dad, they came to Virginia City. Of course, it's only a mile between here and Gold Hill, so it wasn't any great problem moving that little mile.

That's pretty close all right. Did your mother ever tell you any stories about her childhood?

Oh, yes, probably hundreds of things. She's told me funny little stories about what they done when they were kids and this and that, but I simply can't remember all the things.

I couldn't remember either. When your grandfather died, how did your grandmother support herself?

She died in 1892 prior to the time that he lost his life in the Como mines. She was 32 years old. My mother has told me when they were kids that they were pretty much shifting for themselves. They had a housekeeper taking care of them after that, and the oldest girls, the oldest boy were taking care of the

other kids; they managed to make it somehow or another.

But all these little things, either my dad or my mom might have told me at different times. Sometimes things that they perhaps wanted you to remember or particularly liked—just general things....

Where did your mother buy groceries when you were growing up in Virginia City?

Well, in that day and age there was only one place to buy groceries. I'm not saying *one place*; we had more than one grocery store at different times in Virginia City in the early days, but everyone bought everything they needed locally, naturally. There were no supermarkets or anything like that. People didn't have any way to get to the supermarket if there happened to be any such thing.

Do you remember the names of any of the stores?

Oh, there was so many grocery stores in Virginia City. Going a way back to my childhood days, I remember we used to walk from our home on Ridge Street up onto what they called the Divide—that's the dividing line between here and Gold Hill. There was a store up there run by a man by the name of Pascoe. I remember that quite well, because we used to go up there and buy these...you remember these little kind of...kids used them for years for lunch pails, too...like tobacco cans...?

No!

Had a sort of folding handle on top. I used to go up there because we got what they called candy kisses in those days; they were just wrapped in paper, and we'd get them in one of these things. I don't remember exactly how

much they cost; it wasn't very much, but we'd save our money and go up there occasionally.

There were several other grocery stores in Virginia City, as well as other stores: hardware stores and that type of business. Did you ever know that Roos Brothers had their original store here in Virginia City?

Someone told me that. Where was that store?

Are you familiar with the main street?

Well, I've been learning it a little bit. I know where the Crystal Bar is, the Bucket of Blood, and I know where the market is on the north end of town.

Well, do you know where the *Territorial Enterprise* building is?

I know where that is.

This was almost directly across on the opposite side of the street. Incidentally, the name is still on the front of the building; that's a brick building.

We might have taken a picture of it. One day we came up and took a lot of pictures.

I [have] a booklet. This lady that was born and raised here in Virginia City, her maiden name was Young. I just picked up this little pamphlet that she had put out here a few years back, and she had quite an assortment of old original buildings in that. It was pretty thorough. Not in regard to *all* the buildings, but some of the most important buildings. This story was during the years she remembers in Virginia City.

I think that the book was by Dorothy Young Nichols, and it was Virginia City...In My Day.

In My Day. That is correct. Yes. I think she done a nice job of it. Of course, that's why she is remembering what *she* remembered or what she did remember, that she had remembered, and that's what I'm trying to do in this particular instance, what I remember.

We talked about the Roos building now. Was that the name of the building, the Roos building, or did that building have another name?

Not to my knowledge. Prior to my time it was the property of the Roos Brothers when they first started up their business.

That's interesting about Virginia City, that such a major business started right here.

Yes. The name is still on the building, but I often wonder how many people have even bothered to care or even think that it's had any connection whatsoever with the Roos Brothers as they existed in later years.

What was your mother's religious preference?

She was quite religious; she was a Catholic. I guess the entire Carroll family were Catholics, and other than that, housewives in that day and age took pretty much care of their families; they weren't socializing too much. But she did go to church.

Did your mother engage in any activities outside of the home?

She used to love the sports. When I was just a little kid playing, she never missed a basketball game; she was always there. In later years we could get even out of town to some games because they had a few automobiles. We used to sometimes spend a couple of days before [we] got out and got back from

Lovelock or somewhere like that—out in the boondocks, and back here to the boondocks. [laughter]

She was never too civic minded either. It just seems as though, in that day and age, there weren't too many people that thought about anything other than making a living and having a family and trying to provide for them.

We always had politicians, that's for sure. But they weren't to be compared to what you have today. There weren't 10 or 15 people running for a particular office or anything of that nature.

Do you remember any names of people who were very active in the community prior to 1920? Or any of the well-known people or people who influenced the community?

Oh, there was all kinds of people. There is no question about it that they influenced the lives of many, many persons throughout the many years, even back to the real early years of Virginia City and the Comstock. There's always people that do something. They've had so many prominent people—they turned out to be very prominent—that graduated from the schools here in Virginia City years and years and years ago. They always maintained that students in Virginia City somehow or other seemed to get some sort of special education; they all seemed to succeed, even though a great number of them never went beyond eighth grade, and many of them not even to the eighth grade. But some of them finished their college education and went on to be very powerful people—ended up in San Francisco, here and there, all through the country, I guess.

Why don't we talk about your biography now. Where did you go to school?

Well, I attended grammar school through high school in Virginia City.

What was the name of the school?

Well, they were never referred to as anything other than the Virginia City grammar school or high school. At that time we had 2 schools. We had a school on the north end of town—the First Ward School. The school that they just restored, the one that we attended, was the Fourth Ward School.

So you went to the Fourth Ward School for grammar school and high school?

Yes. All the way through.

Could you reminisce for us about some of your grammar school teachers? Do you remember their names and what they were like?

Yes, I can remember a lot of the teachers, some real good ones, and some weren't too hot. Then I first started school there was a lady by the name of Mollie Somers. At that time they had the first, second and third grades in one room, and then you would go into the fourth, fifth, and probably the sixth and seventh in another room. Anyway, I recall this Mollie Somers so well. And isn't it funny? I can remember my first day of school, and I remember it so well. Do you know why I remember it so well? Because I got sort of deathly sick that day, and I sort of messed up my desk a little. And my sister, Carroll, happened to be in the third grade at that time, and Mollie Somers made her clean up the mess.

I'll bet Carroll remembers your first day of school! [laughter]

My sister didn't speak to me, I don't think, for 2 months after that. And that was my first day of school.

Anyway there was Mollie Somers, and then she had a sister by the name of Jenny Somers. They were old maids; neither one of them had ever been married. But they spent many years at the Fourth Ward School teaching. I believe that Jenny Somers was teaching the fifth and sixth grade, but I don't remember exactly.

Oh, we had different teachers all the way through school. I remember a teacher I had in, I think, the fifth grade or the sixth grade—Sadie Smith. I can remember a lady by the name of Marion McKenzie; that was in the seventh grade. I don't know whatever happened, but she didn't think I was quite qualified for the seventh grade. So I stayed there about 2 weeks, and she bounced me back into the sixth grade, and I started out all over again. There were so many teachers. A lady by the name of Williams I remember so well—a lovely lady. Then, of course, through high school we had different professors throughout the years.

Before we go on to high school, do you remember what you and your friends did when you weren't in school during winter for fun? What kind of games did you play?

Well, that's the time that naturally we were in school—the wintertime. I guess like all the kids we done pretty much the same things as the others: broke a lot of windows and that sort of thing, sometimes in the schoolhouse. I can remember in the old Fourth Ward School—it was years later when naturally we began playing basketball, but I think I was only in about the fifth or sixth grade. We didn't really play ball, but they had a couple of old hoops a way up on the top story of the old school. They're still there, incidentally.

Oh, really?

Yes. We used to go up there and shoot a few baskets. They were strictly for the older kids.

I knew you fellows started young in Virginia City. [laughter] Did you sleigh in the winter?

Oh, yes. That was quite a sport in the wintertime. We used to sleigh ride a lot. That was, in fact, the only sport in the wintertime actually that....

Did you ice skate?

At one time they used to do some skating on the reservoir on top of the hill here—the Divide reservoir. Yes, they used to skate. They used to cut ice up there. I remember we used to cut ice up there one time and store [it] in the ice [house] when we were just kids. I think we'd get 50¢ a day or something like that.

You helped them move the ice?

Well, they would have a man that they ordinarily would have cutting the ice into these great big blocks. Then we would pike the ice out to a big chute that.... Do you know what a pike is?

No, I don't.

A [long pole] with a curved point on one end, and on the other side there was a sort of a curl, like a hook. Why, you'd shove the ice along with that, float it to these big chutes—trough-like affairs—and in turn, it would slide down into the ice house down below where they stored the ice. They were using a tremendous amount of ice, as I mentioned, in the deep workings on the Comstock in

these mines, where they were using the dab tubs with the ice water. They would work in 15-minute passes underground, and douse themselves in this so-called tub. They were vats actually, wooden vats. There was a great demand for ice because of [the heat], and they cut and hauled a lot of ice to the mines here.

And that was something the kids helped with?

Yes. Whenever they were cutting ice, we'd get a job for a day or 2 piking the ice in and down to where it could get into the ice house and be stored there until they moved it out.

Incidentally, one of the original ice houses [is being used] now for sort of an entertainment spot. The Jeep Posse here in Virginia City took that over a few years back and fixed it up some; it was in kind of bad shape. They have their party now and then and other social affairs up there. They have a big outside dining arena there and room for entertainment and so forth in the ice house. It's kind of interesting.

Did you and your friends swim in the summer when you were in grammar school?

No. One thing that Virginia City lacked for most of my lifetime was a swimming pool. There was one little pond up in this ravine right here. We call these ravines between the different little mountains. They referred to it as Byrne's pond. It was probably the size of this room, and we used to go up there occasionally. But there was no [pool] until later years. occasionally we would go to Bowers Mansion on a school picnic or something of that nature. There was no opportunity in that day and age for kids to even learn how to swim in Virginia City.

Because there was no place to swim.

I remember when some of my friends used to swim in what they used to call the frog ponds on the other end of town, down below where we lived on Ridge Street. In that day and age most of the sewage in Virginia City run open after it got down so far below the town into the ditches and down through the canyons. You'd have swamplands sort of, and then the excess sewage water would run into these; there was 3 different quite large ponds. We used to refer to them as the frog ponds—there was an awful lot of frogs there. Some of the kids used to go swimming down there. Oh, brother!

That's kind of dirty water. [laughter]

Now they are so particular about sanitation and this, that and the other, I often wonder. But they seemed to survive and thrive and went on most of their lifetimes; and some of them are still going! But that was, I wouldn't say an opportunity or the right place to learn how to swim, but some of them did.

Oh, that's great. [laughter] Where there's a will, there's a way, I guess.

Let's talk about your high school days now. When did you go to high school, and who were your teachers?

From 1926 until 1930. Oh, once again, I had several teachers in high school; some of them are still around. I think at that particular time when I went into high school, there was a man by the name of Nash Morgan, who was principal of the school and the superintendent. I think they referred to them as "principal" in that day. I don't think we had both a principal and a superintendent of the school. I believe it was Nash Morgan who was principal at that time. He later moved

into Reno and was a prominent lawyer down there for several years after that.

Oh, that's interesting!

Donald Richards, he in later years moved to Reno—he also went into the law business. One of his sons is still a lawyer in Reno. I don't know whether Don is still alive; I'm not quite sure. I recall one day in the top story of the old school building. I don't know what I was doing, but whatever it was it sort of irritated him, I guess, and he said to me, "Tex, one of these days, I'm going to throw you out that window, and you're going to flutter like a bird." And, you know, we joked about this for years and years. Every time I would see Don Richards, we would talk about this.

Then there were several others: a lady by the name of Margaret Ernst. She is still living in Reno as far as I know. And there was Tillie Evanson; she was one of our high school teachers. I had so many different teachers—English teachers, math teachers, typewriting and shorthand. Certain ones would perhaps take care of 2 subjects. Not too many at a time, but ordinarily your math, that's pretty much under one instructor, the English somewhat. There was a lady by the name of Thelma Jenkins. Gary Eden—he was at one time principal of the school here. I forget what year that was. And Jake Lawlor. You've certainly heard about the Lawlor Pavilion? Well, that was named after Jake Lawlor.

Was he your basketball coach?

He was never my basketball coach; he came a few years later.

Who was your coach?

We had different coaches. When we played on the grammar school team, we had a man by the name of John L. Metcalf. He coached for several years. He was teaching in eighth grade, but he was coaching us in the seventh and eighth grade, and I believe he went into the first 2 years of high school. Then we had George Gadda. He was coaching us at one time; he lives in Reno. You've heard of Walter van Tilburg Clark?

I sure have.

Well, he taught school here one time. This was after my time—after 1930 or perhaps in the 1940s or thereabouts. He also did coach basketball in later years here.

Oh, I didn't know that! I knew he was a good writer.

I recall one time while he was coaching here, they didn't have enough kids to play basketball in either Virginia City or Dayton, so he combined enough kids to play. They took so many from Dayton and so many from Virginia City to make a basketball team.

That's great. So they got a team together.

Yes.

I know that you played basketball here in Virginia City. Would you reminisce about that?

particularly in the eighth grade and seventh grade, we used to practice—not so much play—in the old Piper's Opera House. I think we perhaps played 1 or 2 games as kids, but in later years we played all of our games in what they call the National Guard Hall.

Where was that located?

Well, happen to know where the town hall or the post office is?

Yes.

It sort of sat diagonally, kitty-corner across the street from the post office, a little south. In other words, right close to where the town hall is—there was a sort of an alleyway between there. It was a big old beautiful building.

In fact, it wasn't really on C Street then?

It fronted on C Street. But we used to do all our practicing and played all our local games in the National Guard Hall in those days.

Who did you play?

At that time it seems as though we played everybody. It didn't matter where it was. Oh, we used to play teams like Tonopah and....

That's a long way.

In fact, there was no such thing as A, B, and double A and triple A in those days. You played everyone, that is, everyone that it was possible to play during a season. Whenever we went to a tournament in Reno, I would say offhand *every* school—maybe with 1 or 2 exceptions where they couldn't afford to send the team from some little town— but *every* school sent a team into Reno for the state tournament.

Was that fun?

It was a process of elimination, believe me. Just visualize all the high school ball teams around the state of Nevada, from all these little out-of-the-way places. Of course, at that time we only had 2 schools in Reno:

Sparks and Reno high schools. We didn't have the new Hug and Wooster. All the other high schools came into being later on. But everyone would go to the tournament. We'd spend like 4 days down there, start the games off—the elimination process— at like 7:30, 8:00 in the morning, play sometimes all through the day and play again at night, and the same went on until they eliminated a certain number of teams. Then it would finally get down to the semi-finals like on a Friday. On Saturday they would have their championship game. But there was no distinction between teams; we played everyone.

It didn't matter how large or how small.

No. There was no classifying the teams as to division.

How did Virginia City do?

We always done quite well. We won the championship from Reno one time. But it was so different in those days. Now at a basketball game, they're running up scores like 100 and better. In those days, if we had a score in any ball game that went up to 20, we thought that was really something.

Why was that?

Well, there was a reason for it. In that day and age the rules weren't like they are now. Nowadays, after every basket, the ball is taken out-of-bounds—passed in from out-of-bounds. In that day and age you had to, after each basket, take the ball back to center once again—I happened to be center, and I remember just jumping your head off all night. You would have to once again jump the ball at center. It was a much slower game. I played forward some, too, in some of my

years. But I was about the tallest one. Anyway, they didn't make them very big in those days.

You are pretty tall, too. [laughter]

That was the process, and that slowed the game down tremendously. You can imagine the time lost each time. Now it's a matter of the ball comes onto the court from the out-of-bounds, and they're playing the game once again. It's a much faster and more entertaining game by far, naturally.

When the kids went out of town to play ball, who drove them? Did you go alone, or did you have any supporters from the community who went with you?

We went alone very seldom, if ever. There were certain people in town that.... You know, basketball in Virginia City didn't just get overly popular in the last 7 or 8 or 10 years. It was always that way. But during our time they had some automobiles by that late date, and there were certain people who would just volunteer wherever we were going to take us. Then there were always those going anyway that could possibly get there, wherever we might be going.

Yes, we used to plan the games, and we would go somewhere like Lovelock, Yerington, Fallon or in this particular area. On the way home, someone would always go later on and prepare this big barbecue deal for us down along the Carson River out of Dayton there, and many times we'd go back there, and that would be where we had our feed. We didn't go in to Wendy's or Burger King in them days. They always would have that prepared, especially if we happened to be in this particular area, and coming back to Virginia City. We used to have some great times.

And that barbecue stop was on the Carson River then?

Along the Carson River, yes, what they called the old Toll road in those days. It went down to the old Toll ranch, and originally it was called the Buckman ranch. It's on the highway going from Silver Springs into Yerington, where the river crosses under the highway there.

It sounds like it was a nice time. Do you remember the names of some of the people who drove you?

Yes. There was a man by the name of Bill Henley. He was always one of our big fans. He was one time head of the Virginia City branch of the First National Bank. One of his sons still lives in Reno. Another man by the name of John Terkla had a restaurant and a saloon here in Virginia City—the Pastime Club—[and he used to drive us].

Where was that, on C Street?

That was almost directly across from the *Territorial Enterprise* building. There's a business there now. I don't know what they call it now; it's changed hands a few times. By that time—the early 1930s, I guess—my dad managed to get an automobile. I guess he managed to save enough money, probably \$700 or \$800. My mother used to take some of the kids at times, and there were others. There was always somebody that was only too happy to volunteer their car and time; those are 2 I remember in particular.

That's how we got back and forth. Otherwise, there would have been a lot of those places we just couldn't have gone. Talking about Wendy's and Burger King and McDonald's, in that day and age we didn't

have even school buses; there was no such thing as a school bus. Consequently you had to get there, and that was the way it was arranged for, and that's the way we got there.

The people were nice to help out like that.

As I mention, all back through the years as long as I can remember, Virginia City was a basketball community. Simply—I shouldn't say simply—but in a big part, simply because we never had too large an enrollment. Now it's changed. We're having a lot more students, and it's growing, naturally; it comes with progress. But all through the years—as I mentioned, one time they had to consolidate for a year with Dayton in order to have enough kids to play ball.

During your high school years, when you were a teenager, what did you and your friends do when you weren't playing basketball and weren't in school? Did you have any particular activities that you engaged in then, or did you work?

I used to sneak around and smoke cigarettes and a few other things. Oh, we just went out and had a good time.

Did the kids have a hangout here in town?

Yes, we did at one time. There was a lady by the name of Heffren. She had a cigar and candy store; later on, a Mrs. Sullivan took it over. They referred to it as Sullivan's Candy Store. Then a few years later this gal that went to school got a job in there taking care of the candy store, and we used to congregate there most every night. That was sort of a kid's hangout like the Block N used to be in Reno. What's the bar in Reno now where they all hang out?

I don't know. [laughter]

Anyway, that was a great hangout.

One of the gang wasn't going to the school. He was school aged, but for some reason or other did not go to school. He had an old Dodge car—they referred to it in those days as the Market Street Bus. Believe this or not, it was a 2-seated car, but in those days they weren't too big, and we used to at times get 10 to 12 into that old Market Street Bus and go to Carson and down to Dayton—around the immediate area. Had great times.

It sounds fun. What was the name of the kid with the car?

His name was Bob Davis. He just died here about 2 months ago in Reno. He lived in Reno for quite a few years.

And you would travel around in the car and visit other communities?

We'd all get in there—gals and guys—and away we'd go, piled up like sardines. And we'd get there and get back.

That's great. [laughter]

Now one time we went to Lovelock, and coming home we had 2 flat tires on this Dodge—the Market Street Bus. It was cold, really cold, and we had to start a fire although there was actually nothing that burned. But we saw a sign for a hot springs along the road there—it's all right to tell this now; the statute of limitations has already run out! [laughter]

Oh, OK. [laughter]

But what did we do? We tore down the sign. We had to do something to keep from freezing to death, and burned it up.

Good thinking, actually. [laughter]

Oh, it was a case of necessity; we would have froze to death.

How did they find you, all you kids out there in the middle of the desert?

There were 8 or 10 of us there that happened to be on that trip, and we were just coming back from Lovelock; I believe it was a basketball game, yes. There wasn't too much traffic on that highway in those days, and you could sit there an awful long time, and it was cold, real cold. Well, we sweat for a few years after that.

Are there any other stories you remember from your teenage years? These are wonderful.

Oh, gosh, I remember so many, many stories, but you have to sit down, and you have to sort of refresh your memory on all these little things. It takes a little thinking time.

Well, in regard to entertainment, during the time I was a teenager, even before that, they used to have dances quite often in the old National Guard Hall I spoke of. One I remember, particularly, when I was a kid was on St. Patrick's, at such time as when the Catholic church always put on the entertainment. They had what we used to refer to as fish ponds. These fish ponds amounted to nothing other than just a little roped-off or curtained-off area [in] 1 or 2 [corners] of the auditorium. We would hang our fish pole over the curtain, and we'd receive some little gift of some kind on the hook.

Did you go on picnics in high school?

Actually there weren't too many picnics in that day and age. Ordinarily one when we all

would get together and go to Bowers Mansion down in Washoe Valley, that was only once a year. The picnics didn't seem to be too popular an activity. But I do remember those picnics at Bowers Mansion. We used to go down, I recall, on the old V & T [Virginia & Truckee] train, and we would have to walk from the railroad tracks clear across the fields to get into Bowers Mansion to attend these picnics. That was quite an experience. In later years, of course, we went in cars, and there were very few cars in that day and age, but some of the kids managed to get their dad's or their mom's car or something, and we'd all get together in 2 or 3 cars and go down and have our yearly picnic. That was about the only thing in the way of a picnic or a get-together in those days where everyone more or less participated. We had a lot of fun; always something going on in those days.

When you and your friends were in high school did you go to movies?

Yes, I remember as a kid going to the old Piper's Opera House to movies. Those were the days of the silent movies before we had what we have today, and I remember so well sitting there. We always would get up in the gallery with our mom and dad or whoever might have taken us to the movie. They had a little booth up there where they had their cameras, and it would throw out a sort of a hazy...I don't know what you'd refer to it as, but we'd sit up there pretty much to watch. In fact, I think at that time we got more of a kick out of that than watching the movie. They were usually westerns or comedies in those days.

Later years, we had a theater in the old National Guard Hall; that was during the 1920s, 1925 or 1926, thereabouts. There was some improvement, but they were still silent movies even in that day; at least they were

in Virginia City. They had the theater there perhaps over a period of 3, 4 or 5 years.

We had a lot of entertainment—monkey business, but I wouldn't want to tell you about a lot of it.

[laughter] OK. What did you do after high school?

I was one of 3 who were fortunate enough to receive a scholarship to go to St. Ignatius College in San Francisco; that was in 1930. I went to college down there one semester and put in part of another semester, and then pretty much for financial reasons, I just couldn't [continue] . Number one, I went down on [an athletic scholarship to play basketball] and didn't plan on playing football. Consequently, when I gave up the football part of the scholarship, why, I was pretty much on my own. Financially my folks couldn't take care of the expense, so I just decided to come back home. I worked for... in fact, I was working in a mine in the Gold Hill area—the Overman shaft—at such time as when I got word that I was appointed postmaster. So I left, and it was only a matter of 2 or 3 days when I went into the post office.

That was in 1932?

This is 1933—7 July 1933. Then from there on, naturally, for almost 37 years that's all I had to do.

When you were postmaster in Virginia City during the 1930s what were your responsibilities?

I guess you would say just taking care of your job and, naturally, doing what you were supposed to do. I never considered it any kind of a big deal, but we spent a lot of years trying

to do our job and trying to do it the way it should be done.

Then I look back now I think how things have changed. In that day and age we done a lot of business—a busy post office.

Who worked with you in the post office during the 1930s?

Well, a gal by the name of Marion Andreasen went to work with me the first day I became postmaster; she worked with me up until 1943, I think it was. Well... [laughter] I was in the service at the time, anyway; I just decided I thought we should do something about it—we were kind of friendly all through those years—and so I ended up marrying the gal. [laughter] We made it for going on 41 years now, so I guess maybe I made the right decision.

You were good working partners. [laughter] Could you tell me where the post office was in the 1930s?

Yes. At that particular time when we first went into the post office, it was located in what they call the Ryan building, approximately where the post office is today. However, that building was destroyed in a fire, and not during the time that we were there; we had moved from that location to another location.

Do you remember about when you moved?

It was sometime during the 1930s, around 1934, perhaps during 1935.

Where was the post office moved to then?

We moved down the street approximately a block or so—that would be north on the main street—into the building that in later

years became the old Silver Dollar Hotel. We had the downstairs portion of the building, and the hotel was operating upstairs above us. The building is still standing; it is a 3-story building.

That was quite an experience there. See, when we moved, in that day and age the post office department was paying such little rent there weren't too many people too happy to provide quarters for a post office. However, that's where we ended up at that particular time and were there for quite a few years. Then later we moved 2 or 3 more times prior to 1969 when they completed the new building where it's located now.

It was just a funny situation. As I mentioned, no one wanted to fix up a building or do anything to accommodate the postal quarters. I think pretty much because the government didn't pay much rent in those days—very little in fact. I don't recall what the rent was, but maybe in the neighborhood of \$40 a month or thereabouts.

That's not very much.

So we moved down there. Then we moved back up the street to approximately where we were originally into another building. It was at that time—in 1950—when we got burned out and lost everything there.

Do you remember the name of that building?

Yes, I do and I don't. At one time they had what they called the Ryan and Stenson clothing store in there, and in later years a man by the name of Ben Wade run what they called the Toggery. The building fronted on the main street. It was a wooden building and at one time part of the Marye building to the rear on B Street. The Marye building was quite a famous building in Virginia City

at that time. We were housed in the wooden building that sat on the main street ahead of the old Marye building when we were burned out there. Of course, that necessitated getting quarters somewhere else, and fortunately the Con-Virginia Mining Company at that time had a little office where the Ponderosa bar and saloon is now. It was unoccupied, so we managed to get in there just on a temporary basis, and we were there until late 1968 or 1969 when they built the new post office. So we moved, let's see, 1, 2, 3, 4 times during those years.

You were a mobile post office! [laughter] Speaking of mobility, did you go door to door and deliver the mail in Virginia City?

No. We never ever did have to my knowledge delivery in Virginia City. You called for your mail and picked it up through the general delivery, or else there were always post office boxes available. Most people had a post office box where they received their mail.

During the 1940s did your responsibilities change as postmaster in Virginia City, or were new responsibilities added to your old ones?

Well, during the late 1940s and even into the 1950s that was at such time as when Lucius Beebe took over the old *Territorial Enterprise* newspaper, and that, after a year or so, became quite a thing and created a lot of business. Naturally, during those years we were real busy in the post office, together with the fact that we were becoming more and more such a tourist attraction. There were a lot of people. Probably a postcard now costs 15¢ or 25¢. But in those days we used to send out hundreds and hundreds of picture postcards every day. I don't believe that's happening anymore. We were quite busy. And then the mines were

operating. Nothing real big in those days, but nevertheless there were people in mining, and the town was quite prosperous.

You mentioned Lucius Beebe. Did he send his Territorial Enterprise to very many places?

Oh, the circulation was worldwide.

Can you remember some of the countries that he may have sent the Territorial Enterprise to?

Well, I would suggest that probably most every country. I don't mean that we'd be sending out 100 papers to one particular country, but there were subscriptions from every country perhaps in the world.

Did World War II affect your duties as postmaster?

Let's see, the fact that I went into the service at that time and was gone for 3 years plus. But I don't think that had anything to do with the operation of the post office; I just didn't happen to be around to actually know a heck of a lot about what was going on during those 3 years.

Who ran the post office when you were gone?

Well, I mentioned earlier a gal that I [worked] with for years and years and married in 1943 while I was in the service. She took over my duties, and she done a good job during those years I was absent.

Did anyone help her while she was working in the post office?

Yes. There were different ones that were working there on a part-time basis. My mother even filled in there during my time in

the service and a few other people. Everything went along smoothly, I guess.

Where did the young men register for the draft during the second World War?

They didn't actually register at the post office, but we were more or less responsible for everything pertaining to the draft: all the lists that they come out with, all the draft orders and this, that and the other. We were more or less responsible for corrections; we didn't actually register them.

Did you register aliens at the post office?

Oh, yes. That was a dandy. We had to register the aliens, and then in turn they had to be fingerprinted. There were a lot of those fingerprint charts came back for corrections, and after a short while I got so I could take fingerprints pretty good.

Were there very many young men in Virginia City who went away to the Second World War?

I imagine we perhaps had as good as or better representation than any town in the state of Nevada. I know my wife has mentioned many times that there weren't too many men left in Virginia City—young men—at that particular time.

Were there many aliens in Virginia City at that time?

Yes. There were quite a few of different nationalities—I think due to the fact that there was mining going on at that time. Why, for that particular reason we probably had more than ordinarily you would have. But every alien, regardless of their origin, had to be registered, and there were quite a few. Just

guessing, I would think that at that particular time perhaps in the neighborhood of around 100 or so.

That's quite a few people. How large was the town at that time?

Well, it's quite a few people considering that Virginia City at that particular time probably had a population of at best 600 people or so.

Was there any one nation where most of these people seemed to be from?

Well, I remember there were a lot of Slovenian people—Yugoslavian. I attribute that to the fact that most of those people were in the mining business. Canada, I recall—there's still people here in Virginia City. I remember registering 2 or 3 at least who were Canadian. There were other nationalities. Some Italian people. French people.

Besides the war and Lucius Beebe, was there anything else that happened during the 1940s that may have affected your responsibilities as postmaster?

I can't think of anything that was out of the ordinary.

Let's move on to the 1950s then. Tell us about the fire that destroyed the post office.

It was in 1950 when we got burned out and had to move.

Did you lose any of the mail when you got burned out?

No. I don't think we lost.... We were quite fortunate actually. Through all the

help of volunteer— actually the volunteer fire department, but everyone helped—we weren't only successful with getting all of the mail out, we even rescued the sections of post office boxes that we set up on the floor the next morning. We didn't lose a day. The mail came in the following day, and we just shoved it into the same boxes, only they were sitting on the floor instead of being up in the partition like they are ordinarily.

I remember one little thing that happened during that fire. Naturally, I was trying to get the safe open. The power was all cut, and there was no lights to work with. I was trying to get the safe open to remove the money and the stamps and et cetera out of the safe, and I remember that there was a volunteer came in with a flashlight while I worked the combination on the safe. He was getting such a big kick out of it, laughing, that he wasn't holding the light right, and I couldn't get the damn combination right on the safe. [laughter] We worked it out anyway, but at that time it was getting down to where we had to work fast because the fire was burning right above, and the water they were pouring onto it was coming down pretty hot, dropping on our backs. We were using an oil stove for heat at that time, and we had two or three 50-gallon drums of oil right behind a partition where we were working, and we just wanted to get out of there! I remember that so well. I don't know why it was so funny to him, but he finally settled down a little, and I got the safe open. The only thing I lost was, I think, maybe \$10 or \$15 or \$20 worth of pennies which we recovered later in the lot after the fire—where the safe stood. But we were real fortunate; we got everything out. I don't believe there was a piece of mail lost.

That's wonderful. Were there other events in the 1950s that you might remember and could tell us about?

Thinking back, I can tell you one funny little thing. Now, this was in 1933 when we first moved into the Ryan building. I found a couple of letters behind a partition in there. One was postmarked 1912, I believe, and another one was even prior to that date. [laughter] They had slipped down somehow or other behind the desk or around the partition. I don't know who those people were, but they never got their letters. I don't recall what I ever done with those.

That's great. Well, it didn't happen when you were postmaster though; you're the one that found them. [laughter]

Let me tell you something else. There were vaults in a lot of these old buildings—big walk-in steel vaults with a combination lock. In fact, there's one in the Ponderosa Saloon right now. Getting back once again to 1933, there was one of these vaults in that building that the post office was housed in, and do you know something? The combination of the vault was written on the wall right alongside the vault!

Privacy. [laughter]

Would you believe anything like that? Well, we had the combination changed! I'll never forget that. Someone must have been more or less forgetful—couldn't remember the combination or something, I guess.

That would explain it all right. [laughter]

Well, there were a lot of funny little things like that; you think about them now and then. You look back on them, and they're sort of comical.

At the very end of the 1950s, you did a commemorative stamp here in Virginia City, didn't you?

Yes, during the centennial year; 1959 it was.

That was the centennial of the discovery of what?

One hundred years discovery of gold on the Comstock. The 100-year centennial celebration. Yes, we had quite a deal that time. I guess we done more business over a 2-week period of time than we did in all the years put together. It was quite an experience.

What did the stamp look like?

I think it was a picture of Comstock. A picture of a horse—I remember that on the stamp. This picture on the stamp was supposed to be the original spot where gold was first discovered on the Comstock. It was an attractive stamp, and it was quite an experience because in a small town like Virginia City you don't ordinarily have those sort of things take place.

What were your responsibilities in relationship to the stamp?

It's hard to explain just what takes place in a situation like that—the first day of issue in regard to any commemorative stamp wherever it might be. But particularly in a little town like Virginia City, it just creates such a problem. You have very few people to take care of these things, and I remember we hired around 30 some odd people to just stick stamps on envelopes. Then the post office department sent men out of Washington, D.C., to take over the cancellation part of it and that sort of thing, and helped arrange nationally to get the program completed. But believe me, we got so many requests for first-day covers—we just got sack after sack

of those every day—and we'd be working sometimes at midnight and later trying to catch up on the day's volume of mail. When I look back now sometimes I wonder how we ever were able to manage it.

so you got many requests from stamp collectors for the first-day of issue?

Oh, yes. From all over the country. They naturally had to include [a] certain amount of money to pay for the stamps to be affixed and given the first-day cancellation.

In the 1960s the state had its centennial. Did you get any of the overflow? Did they issue a commemorative stamp for that?

Yes, they did. The reason we got quite a bit of attention in regard to the Virginia City cancellation was simply because they had a picture of our St. Mary's in the Mountains church on the stamp, although the first date of issue cancellation was in Carson City. But just due to the fact that the stamp did bear that picture of the old St. Mary's in the Mountains church, it created a little excitement for us. We used our cancellation on a lot of those stamps. It was nothing like the [1959] centennial stamp issue, but we cancelled a lot of first-day covers on that; people, of course, wanted the Virginia City postmark for that one and only particular reason. Yes, we were quite busy during that time, [but] not like during the [1959] centennial celebration.

You were postmaster through the 1960s. Was Mrs. Gladding still your assistant during all those years?

Right up until the last day; from the first day to the last day. [laughter]

Did you have any other assistants during those years besides the people that came in during the second World War?

Oh, yes. At times we had different people working. In that day and age you would have to fight for every dollar of clerk hire allowance that you might get; sometimes we could only keep these people for maybe 2 hours, 4 hours a day. But there was many different ones that worked off and on. A little lady by the name of Ruth Elkin worked with us for quite a few years, and then when we retired in 1969, she took over as acting postmaster until such time as she was confirmed and became postmaster. I don't know how many years she was there—10 or 12 years after we left.

You had the zip codes come in while you were postmaster. When was that, and how did it affect your job, if at all?

It had to be in the late 1960s. And how did the zip code in our particular instance improve or not improve the postal service? Well, as the time I thought it was the goofiest thing that the government could ever think of, and I remarked at times to people who asked the same question you did that I thought it just was working wonders in the way of slowing down the mail. I'm not being critical, because I think things are bad in the post office. But at the time I couldn't see how it would necessarily [help]. I guess eventually it made it easier on the distributors and the delivery people. It certainly probably helped in the way of getting the mail through a little faster. But I don't know; things are so changed.

Now that is another thing—during our time everything was worked within the post office here. Every last piece of mail whether it be a greeting card, a postcard—which we had thousand of every week, every day

sometimes in the summer—no matter what it was, everything had to be cancelled at the post office here. Now all of the mail, unless you drop it in a local drop box for Virginia City, is all bundled and sent to Reno to be processed, and it bears a Reno postmark.

Now to me this is a little idiotic, but people would say perhaps, "Well, you're prejudiced." But another good example: I could mail you a letter [from] Virginia City. Your residence might be in Carson City or Dayton or even Silver City, Nevada. That letter couldn't go direct to Carson City like ordinarily it always did when we were [in the post office]. Now it has to go into Reno to be postmarked with a Reno postmark and then back to Carson City. I can't see how that speeds up the mail, but in the mail processing they have the machines and the equipment, and it no doubt helps. But it just doesn't make good sense for a letter to go around and around and around. Naturally they process hundreds of thousands [of letters], and they have the equipment—distributors and machinery—to process [the mail] with the apparent idea of speeding up the delivery. But then I'm getting a little old-fashioned.

Oh, no. [laughter] Is there anything that you can remember in your career as postmaster that maybe we haven't touched on yet?

Well, after almost 37 years, it was just a day-today situation as far as I'm concerned. There were a lot of things happened, funny things and different things, but it just went on and on. I guess after all those years, we just got kind of tired of the same old monkey business, and we decided to give it up.

And you retired what year again?

That was 31 October 1969.

What I'd like to do now is recount by the decades the history in general of Virginia City from the 1920s through the 1950s—things that you feel were important that occurred during those years. Would you go over what was happening in the 1920s, and then mention what kinds of mines may have been working in the 1930s? In 1922 a cyanide mill was put in out at the American Flat. You were very young then, but do you remember anything about the 1920s and American Flat?

That was 1922 when they first started building that mill in the American Flat area. That was Comstock Merger mines, incidentally, at that particular time. Gold Hill is only a mile from Virginia City, but there were right around 3,500 working people in the mines here at that time.

That doesn't include the family?

Those in mines—miners. That [mill] started around 1922, and they continued, I think, up until 1925, perhaps part of 1926. It was only a matter of close to 4 years, I think, during that operation. But when you stop and consider 3,500 working men actually around the mills and the mines, we had a much larger population then than we have had right up to date.

A lot of people. During the 1920s there was Prohibition going on. I've heard rumors that there were all sorts of wonderful things happening in Virginia City during Prohibition. [laughter] You were very young, but do you remember any stories about Prohibition during the 1920s?

Yes. I remember one thing in particular. They maintained that at one time there were 22 or 23 stills operating in Virginia City

making homemade booze. [laughter] At the time we thought it was funny—we used to go out and steal the whiskey and then in turn sell it to somebody. Why, we could make all kinds of money that way. [laughter] They couldn't do much about it because it was illegal, so ordinarily we got by pretty good. Virginia City wasn't the only town where this sort of thing was going, thinking of Prohibition. But I remember that was quite a time—when you consider that many stills operating in this little town of Virginia City. So somebody was doing something.

Yes. A woman by the name of Mary Ann Goldman wrote a book called Golddiggers and Silver Miners. In that she looked at houses of ill repute on the Comstock. Were they still running in the 1920s?

Oh, yes.

I thought that they ran until the 1940s, but I wasn't sure.

Yes. I would guess sometime around the 1940s when they finally had problems even—at that early date. Why, they talk of the drug abuse nowadays. Well, it was nothing like nowadays, but I think that's what created the problems that eventually were the reason for just ending that sort of thing.

During the 1920s were there Chinese and Indians still living in Virginia City?

Yes, there were both. I mentioned earlier that we had 2 different Indian camps: one on the south end of town and one on the north end of town. There were quite a few Chinese in Virginia City—mostly business people: the restaurant business, laundries and that sort of

thing. But nothing like in earlier years when they had the Chinatown here.

Was the Chinatown gone in the 1920s?

It was pretty much gone in regard to any great population of Chinese. There were still people in that so-called Chinatown.

Are there any buildings still standing in Chinatown?

No, there aren't. They attempted to reconstruct it, and there are buildings there now that were built over a period, the last 6, 7 years or so. But that was just a promotion; there's nothing of the old original Chinatown.

Do you know when those buildings disappeared?

I wouldn't exactly, but I would guess perhaps in the 1920s or even a later date when they actually disappeared. I remember buildings here, and there is one foundation left down there that was part of the old Chinatown, but there's no other remnants that would be distinguishable as part of the old original Chinatown. They maintain that at one time Virginia City had the largest Chinese population—outside of San Francisco—than any city or any town in the entire western part of the country, so we must have had quite a few Chinese people in Virginia City.

Now there was a big drop in the mining between the 1920s and 1930. Did that drop in population occur when the American Flat mill closed down?

Very definitely between at least 1926 and 1930 or perhaps even 1932, there was a big change. I mentioned the 3,500 working people, and during that 5 or so years, why,

we were left with hardly any population at all. During the time of the Comstock Merger mine and that operation—the American Flat area—a lot of people were living right there. There was quite a community in American Flat at that time. There were accommodations there for the miners, and there were accommodations here in Virginia City and also in Gold Hill. The buildings no longer exist; there's no semblance of there ever having been a town actually [American Flat]. But it was quite a community. They had a huge boardinghouse and I would say in the neighborhood of 35 or 40 individual houses. [The boardinghouse] had a massive dining room where the miners ate, and [there was] even a big bakery connected with it.

Was all this connected with the mill itself?

Yes. During those years that's what created the activity down there—naturally all the building and the reason for people living and being there. But then in turn, they didn't accommodate all those working people. They were living in a lot more houses in Virginia City.

There were a lot of Mexican miners at that time. I recall one rooming house here in Virginia City—a rooming and boardinghouse—and it wasn't too big a building, but they housed 35 individuals, all Mexicans at that time.

Do you remember the name of that boardinghouse?

No, I know where it was, but I don't remember just what they referred to it as. You couldn't believe the activity in Virginia City at that time. I *am* old enough to remember it during those few years that they were operating; it just was a thriving community.

And all this changed with the closing down of the American Flat?

Well, naturally that's what contributed to losing all those people. There was no activity, no reason for them being here.

Then American Flat closed down and the population declined in Virginia City, did many of the mines close down because the mill had closed down?

All of the mines were affected—pretty much the mines in the Gold Hill area—because that is where they were getting their ore. The source of the ore [was] through what they referred to as a haulage tunnel, which went from the mines, particularly in the Gold Hill area and 1 or 2 up here. They were taking these ores through this so-called haulage tunnel from out of the mines, particularly in the Gold Hill area, to the mill in American Flats.

Did the haulage tunnel go right through the mountain to American Flat?

Yes, it did. It was connected to the deep mines in the Gold Hill area and Virginia City, too. That was the purpose in running that so-called haulage tunnel—to have the means of supplying the mill with the ores that they were taking out of the mines.

It happened to be one of those periods where it was boom and bust. Of course, that happens in all the mining communities; always has. However, that was on a much larger scale than any mining I can ever remember around this [area]. For that short period of time it was quite an operation.

In the 1930s, was there much mining going on in Virginia City?

Not too much, no. There were smaller operations that were taking place; what they called the central Comstock mines were operating in the 1930s—1933, 1934 and 1935.

Now what were the Central Comstock mines?

Well, it was just a smaller mining company. At that time they had what they called the Norcross property: Norcross tunnel, the Chollar tunnel. The Norcross tunnel goes back in under Mount Davidson—originally Sun Mountain if you go back 100 years. They built a mill and worked for quite a few years. Nothing on a large scale, but they employed quite a few miners.

So the town prospered for another 10 years or more, perhaps a little longer than that. Then once again there was another period when so far as mining was concerned, it would slack off. Then in later years, someone else would come along and start a little deal here or there. But, as I mentioned before, it was pretty much up and down.

The Chollar tunnel now [has] a tourist mine operation going on down there. There was other smaller operations. During the 1930s there was actually nothing in the way of mining that was too big.

Now, this was during the Depression. Did that affect Virginia City very strongly?

Certainly the Depression affected everyone everywhere throughout the entire country, but in Virginia City the Depression didn't seem to be very severe. I think a lot of that was simply because we were such a small community, and people were so close-knit they would more or less take care of each other. In turn, the business people, such as the grocery stores and the people in the wood and coal business, would let you run a bill with

them. It was all credit, or pretty much of it credit, and they'd carry over sometimes even for 2 or 3 years. There was a lot of unemployed, naturally, but people somehow or other stuck together. At such time people did lose money which they never recuperated other than a percentage here and a percentage there, very little overall. However, the Depression was not real severe here; it was felt, but nothing like the big cities and bigger places.

There were a couple of roads built in the 1930s or early 1940s. One of them was the Carson road. Do you remember when that was built, and did any people in Virginia City work on it?

I can't recall the exact date. That highway circles the mountains to the east and verges with the old-time Gold Hill-Silver City road.

Geiger Grade was built around then, too, wasn't it?

That was built before, somewhere in the neighborhood of 1936 or 1937, so there wouldn't be too much of a difference in regard to dates there. I do think, however, it would be a few years later when they finally built the highway going to Carson City.

I remember at such time as when they were surveying for the highway, when actually they started work on it and when it was completed, but I cannot remember the exact date.

Did people in Virginia City work on these projects?

Some, not too many. Ordinarily, the state always had their own employees—highway crews, et cetera.

OK. During the 1930s and 1940s buildings started to fall down in Virginia City. Do

you remember any buildings that started disappearing during those years?

Yes, I do, and it's not one of my fondest memories of Virginia City because there were different buildings that were destroyed. By saying destroyed, I mean for no particular reason whatsoever other than what certain individuals were going to gain in the way of monetary gain. However, Virginia City wasn't populated then the way it is at the present day, and we didn't have the great tourist attraction. We had the tourist attraction, but we never got anywhere near the number of tourists coming to Virginia City that we naturally get in this day and age. But these buildings somehow or other were wantonly destroyed for salvage purposes.

People would sell them for the bricks or something?

Whatever they could recoup out of it. Incidentally, the National Guard Hall we spoke of, one building in particular. The old Masonic Hall building, a grand old building that had been there for 100 years.

Where was that located?

That was on this side of town [not] far beyond what they call Sutton Street, going up the main street toward the other end of town. I mentioned earlier the First Ward School and the Fourth Ward School, which I attended. The First Ward School—the same tragedy happened there.

Oh, it came down in the 1930s or 1940s, too?

Along during those years. And what they referred to in those days as the old Corporation House.

Where was that?

It was the old firehouse, actually. Do you happen to know where the Castle is here?

Yes, I do.

Well, it set on the hill, on that high knoll just beyond the Castle.

That's the south end of town?

Yes. It was an old wooden building with sort of a bay window. The fire bell was up in the belfry above the building. And this belfry lookout was located so that they could see pretty much in both north and south directions, to the end of town south and to the end of town north. And of course, that was the purpose of the location, high above the town on a hill. Reason it was set up that way, in event of a fire, why, they would ring the bell; the horses knew the signal and [would] be right out of the stalls underneath the harnesses [which were] all hooked up on racks, and the firemen would drop the harnesses on. They had 3 hookups to the cart. They did it all in a matter of so many seconds, and then away they went down the hill heading for the fire wherever it was.

But getting back to the destruction, some of these buildings would be priceless today in the way of a tourist attraction. The Corporation House was one of them. It would be nice for the townspeople to still have them. But there were 3 there that were just destroyed for apparently no reason other than salvage and personal gain. I don't have to mention the name of the person that seemed to be the one that took part in each 3 instances; he is no longer living.

Well, I heard that there was a young man who burned some of the old buildings during the 1930s. Are you familiar with that rumor?

No, I honestly am not familiar with that.

We heard he was named Bodie something or other.

Oh, well, this is a different situation completely. Now, he was not even an adult. He was hardly a teenager. He had the nickname of Bodie Bill, and he acquired that nickname in Bodie, California, prior to the time the family moved here to Virginia City. Apparently, he had set a few fires around Bodie. That didn't turn out too well. I mean there was property destroyed. Yes, you might say he had some inclination to set fire to the building, but possibly he was too young to know exactly what he was doing. I'd say perhaps he was 11 years old, maybe younger, maybe only 10 years old.

I remember a story about him one time. A friend of mine went out close by where this incident occurred; he was up there on a particular day. [Bodie Bill] was sliding papers under the doorway—had a box of matches and was lighting the papers and slipping them under the doorway—when this gentleman came along and asked him what he was doing. [laughter]

But he never really got any of the buildings here in town?

No, not to my knowledge.

People watched him? [laughter]

Yes. That was absolutely right.

I heard that he actually went to the military and apparently died in the Second World War.

Yes. He eventually got killed during the war.

Now let's talk about the 1940s. How did the Second World War affect Virginia City?

Well, perhaps pretty much the same as it affected most small towns in particular. There were doggone few men around and all kinds of women. Naturally, a lot of those women were taking over responsibilities that ordinarily their husbands [and] some of their family members would be doing, had it not been for the draft and the war. Other than that, I don't recall too much. But in that particular way, it certainly thinned out the ranks of the male population in Virginia City during those 3 or 4 years.

Was there much mining going on during the war?

Not particularly, no. There were a few little operations, but nothing of any significance.

After the war, in the 1940s, tourism became an important part of Virginia City's life. Could you describe the 1940s, and did tourism become important then?

Yes, tourism became most important to the community. When you are thinking in terms of the economy of Virginia City during those slack periods when the mines were not actually operating, [except for] only a few small operations, overall the business houses, the few that we had at that time, depended quite a little on tourism. Many years before, very prominent people out of Hollywood—movie actors, actresses—would make a trip to Virginia City. That sort of thing [combined] together with a lot of promotion on the part of the old business people. Little by little the

tourist industry just grew in leaps and bounds each year, and it just snuck up on you; then in later years it just seemed like there was no end to it. I often enough thought sometimes you walk through the main street, particularly on a weekend, and you can hardly make it through the crowds. I think sometimes, "Gosh, hasn't everybody on earth seen Virginia City by now?" Particularly now it's getting around to where it's not only a summertime situation; depending on weather conditions, it's quite steady even in the wintertime.

During the 1940s one of the more famous persons who came to Virginia City to live here was a person you knew—Lucius Beebe. Could you tell us something about Lucius Beebe and about what he did to publicize Virginia City?

Well, certainly Lucius Beebe was beyond a doubt a terrific asset to Virginia City, encouraging and perhaps responsible for a good many people who did come to Virginia City through his newspaper, through his influence and through his writings. Lucius Beebe didn't only publish a newspaper; he published several books.

Do you remember the names of any of those books?

He was a great train buff. Most of his books were pretty much on them. He wrote quite often about the V & T Railroad. One of the books I remember that he wrote was titled *Steamcars to the Comstock*, I believe. Others were *Virginia & Truckee* and *San Francisco's Golden Era*. Most of his books were about railroading. Some of them [he wrote] in conjunction with his partner, Charles Clegg, who was here during the *Enterprise* days.

When did Lucius Beebe come to Virginia City, and did he ever tell you why he came?

He didn't come direct to Virginia City. His family, what family he had, originated in New York State. The first I ever heard of Lucius Beebe, he was living in Carson City. That was 2 years or more prior to such time he took over the *Territorial Enterprise* and moved here [with] his co-conspirator, you might say, Charles Clegg. Lucius Beebe never rode on an airplane because he loved railroads, and he was afraid to ride in an airplane.

He was a terrific man. Virginia City was so fortunate. Everyone did not perhaps feel that Lucius Beebe was one of the most favorite persons, but he was the type of man that if he liked you, had any reason at all to like you or appreciate you in any respect—and that went for many people—he would go all out. If he thought he had good and sufficient reason to criticize, he had that wonderful opportunity through his editorial column to do just that. He kept Virginia City in a state of constant hilarity, constant troubles at times, and the people just loved to read about these things. [They were] tickled to death whenever there was a local situation where he could run down some supposed scoundrel through that editorial column. He was a brilliant man and a brilliant writer, one of the best in the country. And he never pulled any punches. He said what he thought. You liked it, or next week he'd think of something else to aggravate you a little bit further.

You helped on the restoration of his home, didn't you?

Yes. That was after I retired. I worked up there with a fellow by the name of Vick Maxwell who had worked for Lucius Beebe all the years that he was here, more or less caretaker—taking care of the swimming pool, the bath houses, the house itself, the gardening and all that sort of thing. He worked up there

for a couple of years, doing this and that, restoring the gingerbread, putting siding on the house and painting.

Could you describe the house? I know it's standing.

It's almost directly behind Piper's Opera House. It's sort of a yellowish cream color, all the gingerbread and the trimmings—the window trimmings, around the main door entrance—trimmed in red. It's quite outstanding. It sits right out there [with] the crooked lamp post out in front toward the corner. He had that put there purposely; he wanted it that way. Inside it was just an old-time residence. They always maintained that it was the Piper home at one time; Piper, who had Piper's Opera House, supposedly lived there. He could have, I suppose, but through my lifetime I don't remember that. I remember a family by the name of Connors that lived there all through my years. They were related somehow to the Piper family. I'm not sure of that either. But it was just a beautiful old-fashioned home, big high ceilings, a chandelier, a beautiful staircase. Why, at such time when Lucius Beebe acquired it and after the work to restore it, it was just out of this world—just a beautiful place. Everything was old antique. It had nice bathrooms, carpeted floor, 2 or 3 slot machines in each bathroom.

In the bathroom? [laughter]

Yes. In the bathroom.

Did he often have people in Virginia City up to his place?

Well, being frank and honest in regard to that, he wasn't terribly sociable. However, I am

certain he had his friends come to his home at different times, but I never could remember any time in particular. He might sponsor something for the town, a party of some kind, but I don't particularly remember where he was gung ho in regard to throwing parties in his home. He was the type of man who liked to get out and party himself and play games and drink Jack Daniels. Of course, throughout the many years while he was publishing the *Territorial Enterprise*, he had good and sufficient reason for that. Jack Daniels was one of the most prominent advertisers—full page ads every time the paper came out. Of course, he got a lot of others, too, advertisements from all over the United States. A lot of that was strictly because his name happened to be on that newspaper.

What do you know about his partner, Charles Clegg?

I don't know exactly where he originated, [possibly] the state of Connecticut, from things he has told me at times. They came west, [and] lived in Carson City for a couple of years before they ever came to Virginia City. They, I suppose, were negotiating during that time for the *Territorial Enterprise* to clear the title. When they accomplished that, they took over that and moved to Virginia City. I don't know when they first became co-writers and became so interested in the area.

When Lucius Beebe died, Charles Clegg fell heir to everything. I'm not too familiar with Chuck Clegg's background other than the knowledge I have during the years that they were together on the *Territorial Enterprise*. I do recall one time he told me that during the Depression he was selling papers on the street corners, taking home on a lucky day 50¢ or a dollar to help his mother keep the family going.

I've been told that a woman called Wild Horse Annie lived here. Did you know her?

Yes, I knew her. She did not live in Virginia City; she lived in the north end of Storey County, down in what they refer to as the River District. The Truckee River runs through the canyon going east around what they call Lockwood. She and her husband had a ranch out there for several years.

She became quite interested in the slaughter of the wild horses and the way they were being tortured. At that time we had—myself and a friend of mine by the name of Jack Murry—done a lot with that even before Wild Horse Annie became involved. We'd already protested this within Storey County, and she came into the picture a few years later. We managed to, eventually, first of all get it outlawed in Storey County. Then we went before the state legislature in Carson City and got a state law passed. A few years later they passed national legislation for the protection of the wild horses.

She was a wonderful lady, and through that one thing alone she gained so much prominence. She was a secretary for a lawyer in Reno. But she came into the limelight little by little over her efforts toward that Wild Horse Petition law.

The activity that they were trying to stop was called mustanging, wasn't it?

Yes.

Could you tell me what mustanging is?

Mustanging has different definitions. Mustanging, years ago, [was when] the cowboys would go out and chase wild horses and that sort of thing on horseback. But this situation got around to where they

were trapping the animals and leaving them within the traps for days at a time. And then also hunting them with small planes, rounding them up with planes—sometimes shooting down the ones that lagged behind a little—and sending them into the slaughterhouses for dog food, making a few dollars off of each carcass, naturally. I have a book [*Mustang, Wild Spirit of the West*, by Marguerite Henry] I'd like to show you if you'd like to look at it.

Oh, I would love to look at it.

It's not fiction. Some of the liberal incidents are more or less exaggerated, but it's pretty true just as to what happened starting here in Storey County and on through to the time when they finally got national legislation to protect them.

And you were involved in this movement from the start, then, actually?

Yes. Prior to such time as Wild Horse Annie. I'm not saying that to be critical of her, because she became interested for the same reasons that we had been interested, and she was in contact with us. Finally she entered into her out all extra effort toward trying to bring this sort of thing to a halt.

In regard to mustanging, in that reference I should say to the mustanging that was taking place at that time. A mustanger years ago was simply a cowboy who went out and chased horses, perhaps to break to ride, or perhaps for some good honest reason, rather than for dog food. Now these people that were rounding up these wild horses during these years were strictly out for profit.

This is during the 1950s?

Yes. At that time they were out for nothing other than what they could gain financially. Along with it, the horses were being tortured and starved and ill treated. That's the reason we started the effort toward bringing about a satisfactory end to this situation.

You people worked hard and did some real good work. Virginia City has become a popular place for artists. Could you tell me something about that?

In the past several years we've had, during the summer months, different groups of artists who would come in and paint pictures of the old buildings: the churches, the old-time residences and that sort of thing. We have had local artists here throughout the years. Lou Hughes was quite famous.

Did you know him?

Yes, I did. He lived in Virginia City for years.

Do you know where he lived?

He lived up on what they used to call Nob Hill in the early days of Virginia City. Most of the buildings of that time—the fancier homes—were located up there. I can't remember the exact house that he lived in. We had another artist by the name of Lou Siegriest. He was well known. I knew them all. We have a local artist here now who's done some nice work in paintings, and she does pencil sketches and that sort of thing of some of the old buildings. Her name is Betty Larson. There was another artist here one time by the name of Beck Young. Have you ever been in the Ponderosa Club? It's on the main street on the corner of Taylor and C Street. There's a painting in there of Julia Bulette, done by

Beck Young. I knew him real well. It's quite a painting. He also done some other paintings of different early-day Comstock kings. I believe there is one of Mackay. They're all on the wall in the Ponderosa. It was for many years the Sazarac.

Originally there were 2 Sazaracs. In the real early days the original Sazarac bar was on the opposite side of C Street, on the east side, sort of kitty-corner from the Crystal Bar. They used to have what they called the Liar's Club. I'm talking about things that I only know from reading about. In the real late years, they opened up a Sazarac bar on the opposite side where now it finally became what they called the Ponderosa.

We do have another artist in town by the name of Annabelle Shelly. She lives in Virginia City.

What kind of pictures does she paint?

I'm not an artist. I've seen pictures during several years that if I had to paint that sort of thing, I wouldn't want to be an artist. She paints desert scenes and pictures of buildings. She's been coming here for quite a number of years in the summer months, and with groups that were painting. She and her husband bought a house several years ago, [and] moved up here permanently.

So there have been quite a few artists in town since the 1950s?

Yes. A lot of them are not as well known as some of the more prominent ones like Lou Siegriest and Beck Young.

One thing I was old enough to remember in the 1960s was that Virginia City had the old-fashioned telephones, and you had to go through an operator to make a call. Do you

know when that changed? Could you tell me the names of the last operators?

It [ended] in the neighborhood of perhaps 8 or 10 years ago. The last operators? Well, there was a lady by the name of Frances Avansino, a lady by the name of Marcella Goodman, a lady by the name of Lora DelCarlo. I understand they worked different shifts.

Could you describe how the phones were before the change and what the change was about?

Sure. You didn't call people in those days by number. You'd ring the phone and say, "Will you call Joe Blow?" And the response from the operator oftentimes would be, "Well, I don't think he's home. I think I saw him go by in a car, perhaps going to Carson City or something." [laughter]

Very few times would you ever call anybody, you wouldn't even bother to look up the name and the [number]. Everybody knew everybody, and if you wanted to know what was going on and what the score was of a game being played out in some little place, they'd make it a point to call you up whenever they got the score and tell you what it was. It was really something—lasted for years and years. I think this was perhaps the last of that type of switchboard. As antiquated as that was—we actually had operators who were plugging the keys—that's the way it operated. If you wanted to know something, all you had to do was ring the phone.

Well, those are all the questions I have. I would like to thank you, Mr. Gladding, for having me into your home and sharing your memories of Virginia City.

You're welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHS



“I often wonder how many people think that it’s had any connection with the Roos Brothers.”



Mail in Virginia City was not delivered door to door as
“most people had a post office box where they received their mail.”



The Beebe house “sits right out there [with]
the crooked lamp post out in front.”



Though the efforts of Mr. Gladding and others, mustangs are now protected by law.

Photographs by N.J. Broughton

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